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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKY (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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AGENDA ITEM [illegible]: [illegible] (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Ms. BOKOVA (Bulgaria), noting that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations provided an occasion for stocktaking, said that the profound changes which had taken place in recent years had strengthened the perception that peace, economic growth, protection of the environment, social justice and democracy were interlocked and mutually reinforcing. An innovative approach towards development was needed and the United Nations, that unique universal body where global issues could be considered in their totality, had to play a more important role than ever.

2. The recent United Nations Conferences held in Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing had all reached the conclusion that human-centred sustainable development was an important factor in achieving peace and stability. Hence the importance of follow-up to the decisions and programmes of action agreed at those Conferences.

3. The future of the world would to a large extent depend on the state of the world economy. It was a cause for optimism that the economy was growing more rapidly than before, and the acceleration of the process of integrating the countries in transition into the global economy had been an important factor. In view of their magnitude and complexity, the reforms those countries were making required the support of the international community. Bulgaria hoped that the United Nations and its specialized agencies would continue to do more to encourage the process of transition.

4. Her country had made great efforts to establish a market-oriented economy, with the aim of integration into the global economy and, more especially, into the European economic structures. As its national economy had gradually stabilized, the new Government had adopted an ambitious programme to reduce the inflation rate, halt the decline of production and build up its foreign currency reserves.

5. Unquestionably, definite progress had been achieved, but Bulgaria was facing tremendous difficulties, due above all to the persistence of an unfavourable external economic environment as a result of the strict implementation of sanctions imposed by the Security Council against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

6. As her Prime Minister had already pointed out, the imposition of sanctions had meant losses for Bulgaria amounting to well over 25 per cent of the estimated gross domestic product (GDP) for 1995. The economy's losses for the period up to the end of 1994 easily exceeded $6.2 billion. The industrial sector, with losses of over $3 billion, was the most seriously affected.

7. To those must be added the direct losses arising out of suspended imports from and exports to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and the disruption of commercial traffic to and from central and western Europe, which exceeded $2 billion for the period 1992-1994, or 22 per cent of Bulgaria's

gross national product (GNP) for 1994. As a result, the process of the overall stabilization of the country was seriously undermined not only in the short and medium term but also in the long term.

8. The needed emergency borrowing on non-concessional terms would cause considerable capital outflows in the near future, seriously compromising prospects for financial and social stabilization.

9. According to Article 49 of the Charter, Member States must "join in affording mutual assistance in carrying out the measures decided upon by the Security Council", and Bulgaria hoped that the United Nations system and the international community would help it to cope with the economic problems it was experiencing as a result of the strict application of sanctions. With the conflict in the former Yugoslavia apparently on the verge of settlement, Bulgaria intended to participate actively in the process of peace and reconstruction.

10. Given Bulgaria's intention to move ahead with structural reforms, its needs for investment, project financing and improved market access were becoming paramount. It attached the highest importance to its integration with the European Union and to expanded trade relations with the countries belonging to the Group of 24 and the European Free Trade Association. It welcomed the liberalization of world trade and the establishment of the World Trade Organization, which would play an important role in integration into the world economy.

11. Her Government supported every effort to hasten the integration of south-eastern Europe. A conference on that subject would shortly be held in Sofia to consider measures aimed at strengthening economic stability through sustainable development. A seminar organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the role of trans-European infrastructures for stability and cooperation in the Black Sea region would also soon be held there. Such meetings would, it was hoped, help elaborate a comprehensive regional strategy for south-eastern Europe.

12. Mr. LARRAIN (Chile) underscored the importance of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, in which the issues under consideration could be approached from a new angle. The phenomenon of the globalization of the economy had given rise to hopes that the development of trade relations would accelerate world economic development. Those new prospects had created new requirements: there must be better policy coordination, and the developed countries must no longer reach macroeconomic decisions by taking only their own national interests into account. An interdependent global economy entailed coordination and cooperation as imperatives. Among the issues that should be included in the Committee's new agenda were the question of international flows of capital and the role of the international financial institutions. The action taken by the latter must be general and non-discriminatory, allowing all countries to apply the adjustment measures they advocated. The global economy demanded discipline on the part of all the international actors. Thus far, the developing countries were the ones which had carried out reforms as part of the structural adjustment process. It was therefore indispensable for the industrialized countries to support the efforts made by the developing countries and to give concrete signs

that they would respect agreements concluded within GATT, especially in the area of agricultural subsidies. In the new context, the notion of cooperation took on fresh importance, and it should henceforth not be restricted to assistance within too limited a framework. Given the globalization of the economy, the traditional forms of international cooperation must be reconsidered.

13. Certain initiatives, however, were noticeably aimed at diminishing the role of cooperation by reducing the amounts and recipients of official development assistance. The problems of underdevelopment now had direct and immediate repercussions on the world market. The destitute masses, as yet economically marginalized, must be brought into the global economy as consumers.

14. The reform of the United Nations system should ensure that more efficient action could be taken, primarily in the social and economic fields. It would thus be a serious mistake to reduce cooperation for development. Recent international conferences had shown that the entire international community shared the same difficulties, which should be resolved through collective efforts. On another note, it was noticeable in recent years that none of the commitments undertaken had produced the expected results. There had been too few resources for international cooperation and too many pretexts for justifying an obvious lack of political will. It was therefore imperative that the United Nations system should follow up those commitments, particularly at the time of the triennial policy review of operational activities.

15. A development programme should now be implemented, a subject on which there appeared to be consensus. In essence, the new stage which the United Nations was entering would be one of action. The declarations and commitments made should be translated into practice, which required political will. The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations provided an unprecedented opportunity for the adoption of a programme of action for development.

16. Mr. GUILLEN (Peru) said that the Committee's agenda was wholly in keeping with the mandate conferred upon the United Nations relating to international peace and security and aimed at providing all peoples with better living conditions. In recent years, the Conferences held in Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Vienna, Copenhagen and Beijing had resulted in plans of action and commitments that were of direct interest to the Committee in the sense that they were intended to improve the quality of life of all individuals, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable among them.

17. The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations provided the opportunity to set priority themes for its future programme of action in the light of the international changes taking place. Together with the predecessor resolutions 45/264 and 46/235, General Assembly resolution 48/162 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations provided an appropriate framework in that respect.

18. The fundamental questions to be addressed by the Committee included that of international financial flows, which went hand in hand with market imbalance and vulnerability and the role of the Bretton Woods institutions. Mechanisms should be established that would both create conditions conducive to stabilizing private capital flows and protect the interests of the developing countries.

19. The triennial policy review of operational activities was an important item on the Committee's agenda. All developing and developed countries should endeavour to ensure that United Nations funds and programmes functioned efficiently. For its part, the donor community had responsibilities and should contribute to those funds and programmes.

20. The problem of external debt was linked to that of trade relations. Although the developing countries were making considerable efforts to open up their markets and attract investment and capital from the industrialized countries, they had difficulty in gaining third-market access for their products owing to the protectionist measures applied by such markets, which was prejudicial to economic expansion in the developing countries.

21. Peru supported all the initiatives taken in the United Nations system concerning the relationship between the protection of the environment and development. It also endorsed the concept of sustainable development in which connection it commended the work accomplished by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

22. It was regrettable that the lack of financial resources continued to form an obstacle to the implementation of Agenda 21. The commitments undertaken should be implemented promptly, particularly those contained in chapter 33 of the Agenda and those relating to an official development assistance contribution of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product. Technology transfers were also an extremely important issue, to which the Committee should devote particular attention in the future.

23. Mr. MOHD HASSAN (Malaysia) remarked that resources for development activities were steadily declining, which made it difficult to follow up recent international conferences and implement their decisions.

24. The Committee should revitalize itself with a view to seeking effective solutions to the problems of development. It must assert its leadership in policy development and ensure that commitments were fully implemented. It must not, however, be marginalized from the discussion of global economic development issues.

25. Development cooperation was founded on a common sense of purpose, the establishment of a global system that was fair, transparent and conducive to progress, and the availability of sufficient resources. Unfortunately, political commitment to development assistance was waning, as a result of which funds had declined and debates for building consensus had often come to a dead end.

26. The United Nations could not be oblivious to the plight of the destitute living in abject poverty. Attention should be focused beyond population control and natural resource management in the developing countries with a view to adopting a comprehensive approach towards development problems. The United Nations should endeavour to address the imbalances and lack of transparency in the global economic system and ensure that major decisions taken at the global level took account of the views and concerns of all countries, in particular the developing countries.

27. The reform of the Bretton Woods institutions was urgently needed. Although they were part of the United Nations system, they had proceeded along their own track, insulated from United Nations evaluation. The governance arrangement of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund should be reviewed to take into account the changed structure of the world economy and the new economic significance of certain countries. Such, institutions should re-evaluate their strategies and priorities with a view to addressing the needs of the developing countries. Coordination with other United Nations bodies should also be strengthened.

28. As the United Nations commemorated its fiftieth anniversary, measures had to be taken to solve the problem of the financial crisis, which particularly affected development activities. Although some countries honoured their commitment to official development assistance (ODA), the target of 0.7 per cent was far from being achieved and the gap between developed and developing countries continued to widen. ODA remained an essential resource to assist developing countries in building the necessary infrastructure for development, but it still needed to be augmented by funds from other sources.

29. In order to meet the challenges of development, the international system and decision-making structures should be reformed and a new framework for international cooperation in development should be established. The developed countries should address development problems in a sincere and comprehensive manner, with a view to helping deprived countries and improving relations between rich and poor countries. Globalization had contributed to interdependence. New partnerships must be forged, common problems resolved and new opportunities created, with the involvement of all the players. It was important to invest in human resources; empowering people by promoting knowledge and innovation continued to be the cornerstone of Malaysia's development strategy.

30. Mr. MBATHA (South Africa) said that the United Nations, in the 50 years since its creation, had made an important contribution to the creation of a better world. In the same way as it had helped to defeat apartheid, it should now focus its attention on the fight against poverty, especially in Africa, and to that end it should promote development.

31. Although South Africa had not been a member of UNCTAD for long, it recognized the essential role of that organization in trade and development. In the light of the completion of the Uruguay Round negotiations and the creation of the World Trade Organization, UNCTAD was the main United Nations institution concerned with development, expanding technical cooperation and promoting economic growth.

32. The Trade and Development Board had accepted South Africa's offer to host the ninth session of UNCTAD in 1996. Indeed, it was essential to establish a framework of cooperation and development to stimulate growth in Africa and prevent its marginalization.

33. Enhanced economic and technical cooperation between developing countries was desirable. Alongside globalization of the economy, the creation of regional economic groupings was one of the most significant new developments. South

Africa was actively involved in some of those groups; most notably, it was a member of the Southern African Development Community as it recognized that growth and regional stability were based on interdependence and cooperation.

34. The developing countries should have easier access to the latest innovations in science and technology. It was also important to develop technologies appropriate to their particular situation. Recognizing the importance of South-South cooperation, South Africa had acceded to the agreement establishing the South Centre, which would function as a research institute.

35. In the area of environmental conservation, South Africa had taken several important steps towards implementing Agenda 21. It had recently acceded to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particulary in Africa, an issue of vital importance to all countries in the region. Legislation had also been passed which would enable South Africa to ratify the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

36. The various international agreements aimed at realizing the objectives of Agenda 21 were important, but their realization placed a burden on those developing countries which lacked the means to implement the agreements. The trade and environmental policies of countries would have to be harmonized if they were to reap the benefits of concerted action. In order to achieve ecological sustainability, special consideration should be given to the development needs of developing countries.

37. The Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in 1996, gave the developing countries the opportunity to study the question of access for all to housing and sanitation. South Africa would soon be hosting a regional preparatory meeting.

38. The integration of the rights of women in the South African Bill of Rights was an important step. South Africa had taken part in the Beijing Conference and was fully committed to implementing the Platform for Action adopted there.

39. The readmission of South Africa to the international community just before the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations had symbolic significance. It was a time for reflection and stocktaking, and it was to be hoped that countries would continue to recognize the importance of United Nations development activities.

40. Mr. SHAH (India) said that the international economy had both positive and negative characteristics. On the positive side were the cyclical expansion in most developed countries, the high growth rate in many developing countries and the significant expansion in world trade. On the negative side were the problems of persistent unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment. It was therefore necessary to promote continued growth in the world economy and to take special measures to help the developing countries and, in particular, to help them to develop their human resources, improve their technological capabilities and invest more in social and environmental sectors.

41. It was essential to follow up on conferences. The Commission on Sustainable Development was a reasonably functioning mechanism to follow up Agenda 21, but the follow-up to the Social Summit appeared to have stalled. The Commission on Social Development had not always had a credible work programme. It was also to be hoped that the question of the composition of the Commission on Population and Development would be decided before the end of 1995. The question of diversity among developing countries and their eligibility for assistance and preferential treatment was assuming greater importance in the area of international cooperation in development. Decisions in that area were often taken unilaterally and were not based on objective criteria. With the shrinking availability of resources for ODA, there had been suggestions to limit access to resources and preferential arrangements to a small number of developing countries, even though all those countries faced the same problems, and notably the problem of poverty.

42. Attempts had been made recently to shift responsibility for international development cooperation to the private sector. While the increase in private financial flows to developing countries was welcome, further measures would be needed to increase the amount of private investment in developing countries and to distribute it more widely across regions and sectors. The international financial institutions should consider the use of guarantees, co-financing and insurance schemes to further that end. It would also be necessary to develop human resources and infrastructures in order to attract foreign investment. It would also be desirable to establish safety nets to protect development programmes against sudden outflows of private capital.

43. Most developing countries had introduced market-oriented reforms, liberalized trade and their investment regimes and allowed the private sector greater liberty. Their economies currently depended on fluctuations in the international economic environment; the Second Committee should address the question of whether adequate steps had been taken to minimize the impact of uncertainties on those countries. Developing countries should be able to take a more active part in developing macroeconomic policy and world-wide coordination.

44. India had undertaken far-reaching economic reforms: deregulation, privatization, liberalization of the external sector and incentives for foreign direct investment. Although those measures had come at a time when the external economic environment was taking a turn for the worse, the country had managed to contain inflation and limit the balance-of-trade deficit. Exports had increased significantly, as had foreign exchange reserves. However, much more needed to be done to stabilize the situation, and to that end India needed the cooperation of the developed countries.

45. To strengthen the development process, the international community should agree on an international framework that would facilitate the developing countries' access to technology. It had put into place rules and mechanisms for trade liberalization, and there was therefore no place for unilateral actions or protectionist measures.

46. The United Nations must be more sensitive to the philosophy of development and the need to provide a better balance of ideas and influences in what the Prime Minister of India had called the "Middle Way", which recognized that there

could be no single solution to the development problems of all societies and asserted the need to avoid political dependence in the development process.

47. South-South cooperation had become a viable, credible and necessary strategy; some countries had made great progress in strengthening complementarities in production and trade, and the United Nations system must find ways of making such cooperation an effective ingredient of economic take-off.

48. The finalization of the agenda for development provided another opportunity to take an overall approach to the question of long-term development. The agenda could not take the United Nations further than what had been agreed to at recent conferences; it was therefore all the more necessary to use the agenda as a framework for focusing attention on implementation of the agreements.

49. The universality of the United Nations gave it a unique role to play in development. To enhance its credibility, it must temper the purely market-oriented and finance-based approach supported in other forums and integrate a development perspective into its international peace-keeping and security activities.

50. Mr. AMORIM (Brazil) recalled that in the preceding year an atmosphere of optimism and confidence had prevailed concerning the economic prospects of developing countries, as had been confirmed by the adoption of important international agreements, such as the Marrakesh Final Act, and the holding of major conferences, such as the Cairo Conference. Over the last 50 years, social development had advanced, even in the developing countries, as proved by increased life expectancy, the drop in infant mortality, increased access to education, greater world output and progress in standards of living as a result of periods of sustained growth.

51. Yet glaring inequalities remained widespread among States and within societies. More than 75 per cent of the world's population lived in developing countries, whose share of the world's income was only 16 per cent. Basic social services were unavailable to more than 1 billion people, and unemployment affected 34 million people in the developed countries.

52. Renewed reflection on development was therefore a matter for global concern, and he attached great importance to the agenda for development. New parameters had appeared: the end of the cold war, increasing globalization, the new relevance of environmental issues and the priority assigned to social development. But the most worrying factor was the high levels of unemployment prevailing in the developed countries the cause of which, in the opinion of a public whose attitude to the issues of development and trade liberalization had become increasingly defensive, was the growth in exports from the South to the North. If that interpretation prevailed, the new international trading system built as a result of the Uruguay Round would be at risk.

53. In the past few years, a number of medium-sized economies, as a result of their deeper integration into the world economy, had become more exposed and vulnerable to the volatility of financial markets, swift changes in exchange rates and movements of capital. There should be cooperation between monetary

authorities in those areas, especially between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, in order to improve coordination of international macroeconomic policies.

54. To meet those challenges, the United Nations must take into account the various dimensions of development, especially major social and environmental issues. But no people-centred sustainable development would be possible until certain trade, finance and technology issues had been addressed, nor would a conducive economic environment prevail so long as the commitments made at the major international conferences remained unfulfilled. The United Nations must therefore revitalize the existing relationships with the financial institutions, both the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, to provide better management of the world economy and better analysis of substantive economic issues.

55. Priority must be given to the least developed countries, whose worsening situation was evident from the widespread drop in per capita income and growing human deprivation. Concrete measures and greater South-South cooperation were necessary. The needs of the developing countries as a whole must be taken into account, so that those which had made some progress would not regress to the level of the least advanced.

56. As the international agenda in the economic and social field becomes increasingly complex, greater efficiency must be promoted in the United Nations. The Economic and Social Council should fully exercise its role and contemplate greater interaction with its own commissions, the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the regional economic commissions should remain focal points for policy analysis and liaison.

57. Mr. PRENDERGAST (Jamaica) said that, at a time when the United Nations was in the throes of restructuring and revitalization, its role must be strengthened not only in the promotion of international peace and security but also in the promotion of international cooperation for development. The development mandate was especially important in the light of the increasing globalization of the world economy and the recognized linkages between economic and social issues. That was why core economic growth issues, such as international trade, international finance, external debt and access to science and technology should be returned to the top of the agenda.

58. In the area of multilateral cooperation, the agenda for development would be a useful reference point, in so far as it provided the basis for a sustained development strategy and for policy guidance in implementing existing international development commitments, although greater attention must be focused on the need to narrow imbalances.

59. No progress could be made if countries continued to be heavily burdened by external debt, which for 10 years had been one of the major obstacles to development. The situation had become even more serious in that developing countries continued to be faced with debt servicing at a time when external resource flows to them were declining. The United Nations must live up to the mandate of resolution 49/94 which called for enhanced international cooperation

in order to promote a durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries.

60. His delegation noted with concern that no major multilateral debt relief proposal would be presented before 1996. The World Bank and IMF had refused to forgive the debt of the poorest countries, whose needs merited particular consideration in consultations between the Group of 77, the Group of 15 and the Group of 7.

61. As for operational activities, which the Committee would consider in the forthcoming triennial policy review, and for which resources were becoming increasingly scarce, his delegation recalled the provisions of resolution 48/162, which stipulated that, as part of the overall reform process, resources for operational activities for development should be made available on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of developing countries. Reform should lead to the creation of a new and dynamic relationship between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, strengthening their mandates in order to enhance the efficiency of the Organization. An integrated system-wide mechanism should be put in place to ensure follow-up to the major Conferences, including the Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), an event which ought to promote international cooperation for shelter.

62. South-South cooperation should be supported, as a complement to North-South cooperation, because it provided the basis for greater self-reliance and helped stimulate economic growth and development. The Second Committee should mak coordination and cooperation the organizing principle behind its work.

63. Mr. TUŠEK (Slovenia) said that most countries had understood the need for reform of the United Nations and for the strengthening of its role in international relations. The review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/162 on the restructuring and revitalization of the Organization was an important part of the reform process. Consideration should also be given to rationalization of the agendas of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and to strengthening coordination of operational activities. There had been a proposal to reconsider the question of holding a general debate in the Second Committee. Although it was generally acknowledged that the Committee's deliberations should be concise and to the point, the general debate offered a useful framework in which delegations could reflect on a number of general matters.

64. After acceding to independence in 1991, Slovenia had concentrated its efforts on structural adjustment and macroeconomic stability. Since 1994, the economy had registered a non-inflationary growth rate of over 5 per cent, a trend which looked set to continue over the next few years. In 1995, the rate of inflation had fallen and the unemployment rate had gone below 10 per cent. The previous month, under article 8 of the Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund, Slovenia had assumed its obligations regarding the convertibility of its currency. The period required to create macroeconomic stability had been short and there had been no need to mobilize substantial resources from abroad. However, in order to maintain non-inflationary growth, Slovenia's economy had to be integrated into the international economic system.

There was every reason to believe that the transition period would be brief, particularly if the obstacles to Slovenia's association with the European Union were removed.

65. The current discussions on United Nations reform should draw on the experience gained at recent high-level conferences devoted to various aspects of development. The follow-up to the Rio Conference on Environment and Development had been important because it showed that the Commission on Sustainable Development played a crucial role in the implementation of Agenda 21. The revitalization of the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission for Social Development, and the Commission on the Status of Women should significantly facilitate the implementation of the commitments and programmes adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. It was clear that the functional commissions were gaining new importance. They should be given more attention in discussions on reform and should receive significant support to help improve their effectiveness. The functional Commissions should devise new working methods, including new forms of cooperation with non-governmental representatives. They should look for new sources of project financing, focusing more on the private sector.

66. Slovenia favoured the idea of an agenda for development which was concise, realistic and action-oriented, pointing the way towards appropriate solutions to such problems as unemployment. The agenda could open up new possibilities of partnership between developed countries and the developing world. It was therefore a matter of priority and should be developed without further delay.

67. Mr. DUBČEK (Slovakia) said that in the past few years several major events had opened up new perspectives for the international community in the political, economic and financial domains. The International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women had been notable achievements and the United Nations had a responsibility to play a role in the follow-up.

68. Enhancing international cooperation was a vital task and the agenda for development was a step in the right direction, since it represented a coordinated effort to address five main development areas: peace, as the basis for development; the economy, as the engine of progress; the environment, as the basis for sustainability; social justice, as the cornerstone of society; and democracy, as a model for good government. Those areas deserved full and equal attention.

69. Measures should be taken to strengthen capacities in science and technology that could be of benefit to the economy and the environment, especially in the areas of environmental protection and the rational use of energy and raw materials. The prerequisite for such action was the creation of a favourable international economic environment. It was not, however, essential to organize new world conferences; special sessions of the General Assembly could be convened as necessary and the Committee could distribute the various tasks among different bodies, groups of experts and other national, governmental and non-governmental bodies.

70. With regard to the organization of work, his delegation believed that the Second Committee should hold a general debate once every three years, because the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the general debate of the General Assembly offered adequate opportunities to consider contemporary issues.

71. Mr. FOWLER (Canada) said that the questions discussed at the G-7 summit in Halifax were those at the very heart of the Committee's debate: debt reduction, alleviation of poverty, promotion of the private sector, concentration of assistance where it was most needed and protection of the environment. Member States should reflect on the major challenges of the day, and the United Nations should work to regain its credibility and reaffirm its contemporary relevance. No one could dispute either the need for renewal and institutional adjustments or the necessity of enabling the Organization to adapt to new priorities and concentrate on global challenges. It was also important to distribute tasks better in order to ensure that major problems of concern were dealt with more effectively.

72. The recent conference on the least developed countries was an example of how consensus was beginning to emerge in identifying the core problems. The exclusion of so many countries was in nobody's interest. The international community had become aware of the particular situation in Africa, and had demonstrated a desire to bring about change which had already led to practical measures. Concessional resources for official development assistance should be focused on the poorest countries and on satisfying basic human needs. Reduction of the debt of the poorest nations would be facilitated by the implementation of the Naples terms and the adoption by the Bretton Woods institutions of a flexible and global approach to multilateral debt. A clear will existed to maximize the benefits engendered by the Uruguay Round for the least developed countries. Environmental protection continued to be a major priority because of its impact on long-term economic stability. Consequently, environmental considerations must be integrated into the decision-making process in all areas of activity. Progress made in the areas of climate change, fisheries and forestry should be duly noted. Tangible progress had also been made regarding investment issues, where the private sector had come to be recognized as the driving force, as confirmed in the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

73. Achievement of those objectives depended not only on good government nationally but also on the contribution of the international community. In other words, it was a question of optimum division of tasks. Such division of labour was not intended as a rigid compartmentalization; rather, it must be a "continuum of actions" requiring cooperation between the various institutions. The main consideration was to bring key people together in order to resolve common problems. He welcomed the creation of thematic working groups that included members of the various agencies involved and considered that the intergovernmental machinery should be similarly realigned.

74. Those considerations demonstrated the relevance of the discussions that had already taken place in the context of the agenda for development, with the central themes of the United Nations role in development, the issues of effectiveness and efficiency, the need for better relations with the Bretton Woods institutions, and the problem of coordinated follow-up to major

conferences and summits. Those items were directly linked to the matters to be discussed during the current session. His delegation considered that the United Nations played several roles in development: a deliberative role, which should be strengthened through closer cooperation with the other actors, the organization of special sessions and more effective use of the Economic and Social Council; in that connection, the role and structure of high-level debate within the Council should be reviewed; a norm-setting role, in which the specialized agencies should remain more dedicated to their initial mandates and avoid dissipating their efforts; and, finally, a developmental role, which would be at the core of the Committee's discussions during the triennial review of operational activities, when it would concentrate on the choice of priorities, field-work coordination, budget harmonization and performance assessment.

75. Regarding effectiveness and efficiency, there was no question that the proliferation of institutions, organs and programmes had, over the years, weakened the system's coherence. Consequently, it had become necessary to strengthen the Economic and Social Council's coordinating role, to refocus the mandates of certain bodies in the light of evolving situations and to make development programmes more coherent. The possibility must also be explored of combining some programmes, particularly in the humanitarian assistance field.

76. A common framework should be established for the follow-up to major international conferences, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the system. In that connection, the mandates of the functional commissions should be reviewed, their respective programmes harmonized, and the Economic and Social Council's arbitration role re-examined. In short, a real contribution must be made by the various bodies at each stage of the debate.

77. During the current session, the Committee could not ignore the major changes occurring throughout the United Nations system, particularly in the economic and social spheres. Conscious of the fact that the results of the world conferences and the agenda for development would contribute to the reform and revitalization of the system, his country would endeavour to ensure that the United Nations bodies adhered more closely to their original mandates.

78. Mr. GUTIÉRREZ (Costa Rica) said that the United Nations during its fiftieth year of existence faced particularly daunting challenges on account, in particular, of the paradox that had been inherent in its activities since the outset. Indeed, although the Organization had been created to avert the tragedy of another world war, it had until recently been obliged to function in a context of confrontation, on account of the cold war, and only recently had it been able to accomplish its initial mission.

79. His delegation considered that a more pragmatic approach should be adopted regarding the formal organization of the Committee's work, and the adoption of resolutions which systematically went unheeded should be avoided. Since resolutions served no purpose if they were not implemented, those who drafted them should bear in mind present and future obstacles to their implementation, taking past experience as a guide.

80. In terms of subject-matter, priority should be given to trade, which was one of the main components of development in both industrialized countries and

the third world. A precondition for increased trade was the existence of open and transparent markets in industrialized countries, trade being the primary source of revenue to fund sustainable development. Therefore, the new forms of protectionism should be eliminated and the productive sectors in developing countries should be bolstered through North-South technology transfer. While signs of recovery were apparent, increasing interdependence and globalization had not reduced the gap between industrialized and developing countries. In reviewing management of the world economy, it was essential that due account should be taken of the interests of the most vulnerable countries, which in the past had all too frequently suffered from macroeconomic experimentation.

81. External debt continued to be an obstacle to development and economic growth. Attempts at debt rescheduling and reduction should give consideration both to the monetary and financial aspects of the crisis and to the economic, social and political aspects of introducing reforms and structural adjustments, without forgetting that the middle-income countries, which had not benefited from the debt relief accorded to the poorest countries, were particularly hard hit by those processes.

82. The failure of the international community and the financial institutions to honour their development-financing commitments totally undermined the credibility of their desire to support the development aspirations of third world countries. The total funding allocated remained inadequate, whether for follow-up to the Rio Summit or for official development assistance, which fell far short of 0.7 per cent of developed countries' gross national product. Developing countries should, for their part, reform their institutions and governmental structures to eliminate corruption and remedy legal lacunae, thereby guaranteeing more efficient management of their scarce available resources.

83. The fourth topic requiring attention was that of South-South cooperation, which should complement rather than replace North-South aid. Efforts to bring about such cooperation and integration were essential at a time when many developing countries were in the process of establishing market economies. However positive the indicators, development could not be achieved while poverty, unemployment, social instability, militarization and violations of human rights persisted and in the absence of a favourable international environment.

84. The agenda for development should take account of all of the relevant economic, social, environmental and institutional components, while placing the emphasis on sustainable economic development. Again, implementation and follow-up were essential, and the connection between development, security and democracy must be highlighted because development could not occur where freedom, democratic participation and justice were absent.

85. Mr. KEBEDE (Ethiopia) said that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations was an opportunity to recall that the economic and social advancement of all peoples was one of the principal goals of the Organization. The recent world conferences had all identified the problems currently faced by the world and had shown that the international community could overcome them. What was lacking, however, was the determination to fulfil the commitments made at those conferences. As a result, one fifth of the world's population lived in abject

poverty. All the indications were that poverty was becoming more widespread, particularly in Africa. The main priority of any development strategy for the African continent should therefore be the fight against that scourge. The activities of UNDP in that area were to be commended; it was moreover urgent that the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development should be implemented. The issue of poverty had also been among the concerns voiced by the Group of Seven at the Halifax Summit Meeting.

86. The economic situation of the African least developed countries had been deteriorating for several years. Africa's share in world trade was currently less than 2 per cent. In order to reverse that trend, it was important to help the African countries to develop their productive capacity and to improve their technology and infrastructure; to give priority to the implementation of the decisions taken at the Marrakesh Ministerial Meeting in favour of the least developed and net food-importing countries and to set up a safety net to enable those countries to overcome the difficulties which might result from the Final Act of the Uruguay Round of negotiations; to defer the elimination of the trade preferences that African countries enjoyed; to implement in advance the most-favoured-nation tariff reductions on African export commodities that did not enjoy preferential treatment; to provide financial support to African countries to help them to deal with their balance-of-payments problems and overcome the difficulties resulting from policy reforms; and to assist those countries in their efforts to achieve diversification in order to enhance their competitiveness in world markets.

87. The constant growth of external debt was another cause for concern; the external debt of sub-Saharan Africa had grown at a rate of about 7.7 per cent per year. It was therefore imperative that additional debt-relief measures should be taken, including measures to relieve multilateral debt. Ethiopia attached great importance to the initiative of the Group of Seven which had called for innovative action by multilateral institutions to alleviate the debt burden of the least developed countries.

88. The African countries were conscious of the fact that the development of the continent was primarily their responsibility. Almost all of them were implementing economic measures which emphasized private initiative and market forces. However, while most of the African countries were attempting to move forward, some developed countries had failed to fulfil their commitments. That had been evidenced by the marked decrease in the official development assistance (ODA)/gross national product (GNP) ratio for Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors. The African countries urged their development partners to increase their aid since ODA remained the main source of capital for most of them. It was essential that that assistance, as well as the loans granted on favourable terms by the international financial institutions should be increased.

89. The African countries had undertaken fundamental economic, political and administrative measures during the past few years. Ethiopia had adopted a new democratic constitution; implemented wide-ranging reforms aimed at transforming its planned economy to a market-based one; removed price controls and subsidies; and started to privatize public enterprises.

90. Such efforts were doomed to failure, however, unless the international community took concrete measures and made additional financial commitments. The developed countries must therefore renew their commitments with regard to the New Agenda for the Development of Africa and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, and the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development; take additional measures to cancel all bilateral debts and develop modalities to relieve the multilateral debt burden of the countries concerned, set up safety nets to assist African countries adversely affected by the Uruguay Round, particularly by broadening the coverage of trade preferences to include the major export items of the least developed countries; and support all poverty alleviation measures, especially by helping developing countries to increase their food production and expand their human resources development capacities.

91. Mr. MOUSSA (Cameroon) said that, in the field of development, the record of the past 50 years was a mixed one since, despite the adoption of numerous programmes of action and strategies, the United Nations had not succeeded in ensuring progress and economic and social development in developing countries.

92. The current session was no longer a time to reflect on the philosophy of development but to seek ways to implement all the texts adopted by the Organization in favour of development. The Committee must take its share of the responsibility for that difficult task and must be in the forefront of the development of the United Nations plan of action for the coming years in the field of economic and social development. The agenda for development would be the reference document in the field of development and must set forth, with a view to the implementation of the resolutions already adopted, the priorities called for by the global socio-economic situation; specific measures must be taken in accordance with those priorities.

93. With regard to Africa, he was pleased that the Economic and Social Council had devoted part of its high-level segment to considering the implementation of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The debate at the high-level segment had emphasized the need for the world community to support the efforts of the African countries in implementing the priorities set forth in that programme. He was pleased that its implementation had been included in the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly, since consideration of the issue should lead to a better understanding of African concerns, including, in particular, the socio-economic situation of African countries; in fact, the net flow of resources to the African continent had decreased considerably whereas Africa's total outstanding debt continued to increase and represented over 200 per cent of its export earnings. Direct foreign investment had also decreased, as had Africa's share in the world market, which was currently no more than 2.4 per cent.

94. With regard to debt, it should be noted that the measures taken to date were inadequate because of their fragmentary nature. Any lasting solution to the problem must be a global one, as the Group of 77 had recently stated. The difficulties which had been encountered were explained primarily by the fact that the development partners in the North had not yet demonstrated the political will necessary to achieve a global solution to the debt problem and to promote the development of the most disadvantaged countries. It was to be hoped

that that political will would be demonstrated at the fiftieth session, making it a historic one.

95. Mr. MOJOUKHOV (Belarus) said that the range of interests, ideas and proposals covered in the Committee's general debate had been far broader and more varied than its new agenda. In that regard, he felt that the Committee should focus more on new issues and the experience acquired as a possible input into the system of monitoring emerging crises and the formulation of guidelines for their prevention.

96. In that context, it was important to analyse carefully the occasionally divergent views on fundamental issues, for example different interpretations of the development role assigned to the United Nations in its Charter, the reform of the United Nations system, the restructuring of the economic and social sectors and the reform of the Committee's working methods, differences of opinion concerning the funding of operational activities, the desirability of convening new world development conferences, and negotiations on an agenda for development.

97. The organization of multilateral negotiations at the current session and in General Assembly working groups to analyse proposals and recommendations for the strengthening of the United Nations system and an agenda for development, and of consultations on the adoption of new methods of funding operational activities for development would perhaps lead to a convergence of views on many contentious points. That would in turn promote the establishment of an international economic system endowed with universal and democratic regulatory mechanisms, which would ensure socially and environmentally sustainable development.

98. In view of the foregoing, his delegation wished to make a practical contribution to the establishment of a collective think tank and a database for detailed examination of subsequent stages of the Committee's work. He recognized the need to eliminate the duplication of debate in the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee. Proposals for reform of the Committee's working methods should be linked to the process of strengthening the Council's role in policy-making and the coordination of economic and social activities. He proposed that the problems of countries in transition should be considered as a possible topic for debate at the Council's high-level segment at one of its substantive sessions in 1996 or 1997. He was not, however, convinced of the need to expand the membership of the Council and its Bureau or to amend its rules of procedure and programme of work and those of its subsidiary bodies. His delegation was nevertheless willing to take part in consultations on those matters, on the understanding that that would not affect the activities of the regional economic commissions, especially those of the Economic Commission for Europe.

99. He noted with interest the proposal to amalgamate a number of the Committee's sectoral resolutions in global resolutions. With regard to the idea of drafting a separate resolution concerning the countries in transition, the Committee could take as its starting-point the resolution on the integration of those countries into the world economy rather than the sectoral resolution on trade matters. In that connection, both the general characteristics and the diversity of the countries in transition should be taken into account, as well

as the momentum of the reforms they had introduced and their integration into the world economic system.

100. Belarus had adopted a flexible position on the new international bodies dealing with development issues. It considered that there should be no further world conferences and that the intersectoral programmes of action adopted in those occasions should be integrated into the agenda for development.

101. The objective trend towards a natural division of labour between global organizations and regional bodies and the strengthening of intraregional and interregional cooperation should lead to an improvement in the working methods of the Committee and of the Economic and Social Council. With regard to the United Nations system, his delegation noted with satisfaction the work being done by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, which harmoniously complemented the efforts of the European Union to integrate the countries in transition into the European and world economic systems.

102. It was relevant to mention, in that connection, the proposal by Belarus, approved by the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council, to organize a conference in 1997 on the sustainable development of the countries in transition. The implementation of that proposal could make a useful contribution to the preparations for a special session of the General Assembly on Agenda 21. Belarus hoped that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), other European bodies and all interested partners would support action on that initiative. It also hoped that the Economic Commission for Europe would be involved in the preparation for the conference.

103. Belarus, like other countries in transition in the region, actively cooperated with the Bretton Woods institutions and EBRD. Wishing to be incorporated into the regime of the World Trade Organization, it was convinced that the United Nations and the other multilateral organizations, funds and programmes had an important role to play in assisting the countries in transition. Any reform of the United Nations system which was aimed at improving coordination of activities on a system-wide basis, strengthening organizational structures and enhancing the analytical potential of such activities would be acceptable. Belarus shared the interest shown by a number of countries in transition in such other priority matters as the expansion of cooperation in lending and investment, in particular the promotion and regulation of direct foreign investment, the liberalization of international trade, the development of an entrepreneurial spirit, the establishment of market infrastructures and the strengthening of democratic government structures and social protection systems.

104. Belarus, like Ukraine and the Russian Federation, gave priority attention to the alleviation of the catastrophic impact of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in 1986 and was disturbed to note that the international community was less and less concerned about the humanitarian, medical and environmental problems of the population of the region, which were not confined to the political, technical or financial aspects of the closure of the power station.

105. His delegation would state its position in detail on the various items on the Committee's agenda at a later stage. That position could be understood more easily in the light of certain statistical indicators. During the previous 10 years, the birth rate had decreased by 40 per cent, life expectancy had declined and there had been a general ageing of the population. During the period 1992-1994, the per capita GNP had declined one and a half times and, according to World Bank criteria, Belarus had moved from the group of above-average income countries into that of below-average income countries. In the current budget, 20 per cent of the appropriations were being used to address medical, social and other problems resulting from the Chernobyl accident. Those were only some of the data taken into account in the decision-making process concerning economic policy and international economic cooperation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.